

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT ON PAGE 76, BEGINNING ON LINE 10

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, what is the regular order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the committee amendment on page 76.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Committee amendment on page 76: Strike lines 10 through 17.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are now 3 hours equally divided.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, for the information of our colleagues, if we use all 3 hours, that means we would have a rollcall vote at 12 o'clock, possibly 12:10, maybe possibly yield some time back. Hopefully that will be the case. I know many of our colleagues have inquired when the vote will be. So my guess will be around 12 o'clock.

Am I correct, Mr. President, that the time is equally divided?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I will yield to the Senator from Wyoming 5 minutes—10 minutes?

Mr. THOMAS. Five minutes.

Mr. NICKLES. Five minutes.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I thank the Senator very much.

ENDLESS DISCUSSION AND NO RESOLUTION

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, ironically, I use this time to rise to suggest that it has been a little disappointing as to how we use our time, as a matter of fact, and I have been somewhat surprised at the lack of direction that we have had and that we continue to have in this body in terms of moving forward.

It seems to me that clearly was the message we heard in 1994, the message that we always hear as trustees of the people for whom we are here to do some things. And I am disappointed to see what I consider a change of attitude and a change of direction, where rather than to move aggressively forward to solve some issues and questions, we seem instead to be sliding our feet.

The opposition party—it has become that, in fact, an opposition party—should have some ideas and some suggestions and some directions instead of simply saying, "No, no, we are not going to do anything," and that is troublesome to me. I understand that. I understand that is the technique. I understand that is the system. But I do not think it is the right thing to do.

It seems to me that we do clearly have issues we have to confront. They are here. We have to find solutions to them. The idea that we cannot seem to resolve them is very disappointing to me. It seems that each time we start with some sort of a problem we must address, why, we rise and say, "I am for a balanced budget but," and never come to a resolution.

Mr. KERREY. Will the Senator yield? Mr. THOMAS. Certainly.

Mr. KERREY. I do not understand, Mr. President. This time was reserved to discuss an amendment of the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma to strike language in fact that is authorized in language on an appropriations bill. The Senator from Wyoming is coming to the floor talking about us not having the right direction. I quite agree. I think the amendment itself is an indication why this body takes far too long to reach decisions. And I do not understand, if we are to be discussing the addition of authorizing language to an appropriations bill, why the Senator from Oklahoma has yielded time to the Senator from Wyoming to talk on a matter that seems not to be related to the amendment that he is offering.

Mr. NICKLES. Will the Senator from Wyoming yield?

Mr. THOMAS. Certainly.

Mr. NICKLES. I am happy to yield 5 minutes to my colleague from Wyoming. And just to respond to my friend from Nebraska, we have a 3-hour time agreement. Originally, I requested an hour equally divided. So if the Senator from Wyoming wishes to make a 5-minute speech on some of his thoughts about the inability of the Senate to move, I think that is entirely appropriate and we will have plenty of time to engage in debate on both sides of this amendment.

Mr. THOMAS. I thank the Senator. I will not take time.

I guess this is sort of an illustration of the frustration that I have, that I am willing to share. We went on and on and talked an hour about something yesterday, and we all sat and listened, we all sat and waited, we all sat for the whole evening, and we never came to any solution.

I have to tell you that is pretty darned frustrating in terms of time management and resource management and measuring results. I am not going to intrude in this. I think we should move forward, and I simply come to the floor to share some frustration. As a matter of fact, everyone with "Yes, I am for regulatory reform," comes from that side, but we never get it done. We always have "but, but we don't want to do it."

So the philosophy has become, "Let's don't do it; let's stop it; let's not have authorization for DOD, let's not have authorization for foreign affairs. Let's just say no. Let's threaten to veto everything that comes up."

I do not think that is a positive way to move, and I simply asked for some

time to say it, and now I will stop. But I feel strongly about it. I think that we as trustees of people have some responsibility to make some effort to move. You may not like the result. That is what the system is about. That is why we vote to decide, not to stall, not to filibuster, not to amend to death, not to talk an hour on every topic. I guess I used to be a little frustrated with the rules in the House. I have come to think that was not a bad idea—some limit on the endless discussion and no resolution.

I appreciate the Senator's indulgence, and I simply share a little frustration in terms of us being a little more product oriented in terms of getting some things done in this place.

Mr. President, I yield back the time.

TREASURY, POSTAL SERVICE, AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS, 1996

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT ON PAGE 76, BEGINNING ON LINE 10

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. NICKLES addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, to get to the amendment that we have at hand, the House-passed Treasury, Postal appropriations bill had language that said no funds would be used to pay for abortions as a benefit for Federal employees. This was the policy of our country from 1984 to 1993. It was reversed by the Clinton administration.

I might mention it was reversed after heated discussion and debate in the Senate, in which it was decided by two votes. The side that prevailed in that vote, the Clinton administration, said that we should have taxpayers' funds used to subsidize abortion for Federal employees. Many of us fought to maintain that prohibition. We felt that Federal employees should have rights, should have benefits, but we did not think a benefit should be included for abortion to be subsidized, the majority of which is paid for by taxpayers. If they wanted to get an abortion, that is their right, they can purchase it. It costs about \$250. But we did not think that taxpayers should have to subsidize it. And so that is the reason why we tried to maintain the prohibition which had been in effect from 1984 up until 1993.

The House reinstated that prohibition. The committee amendment struck that prohibition. The amendment we have right now says we disagree with the committee amendment. We would like to have that House language in there. We may want to modify it. I may want to modify it. The Senator from Maryland may want to modify it. But I would like to at least have that language in so we are going to say in effect that we will not use taxpayers' funds to pay for abortion for Federal employees.